

THE ALIEN

By ELEANOR M. INGRAM

VERY silent and sullen was Esterlinga the day Raoul d'Armagnac rode in to take the place of her old governor. Under the hot noonday sun the streets lay almost deserted; if curiosity led any to watch the arrival, it was from behind curtains and lattices that gave no sign of their presence. Not that they knew anything of the Sieur d'Armagnac personally, but they would welcome none of his race to their city.

"Our new master!" said Giovanni di Neocastro bitterly as the cavalcade passed beneath his window, and the words expressed the general feeling.

"He is quite young," said Donna Renata, coming to his side.

"Is he the less a Frenchman?" demanded the old noble. "Since we Sicilians are slaves, it matters little to whom."

Nevertheless he noted grudgingly the firm, clear-cut face and frank gray eyes of the intruder.

"May an apoplexy seize him!" he muttered as he turned away.

His daughter smiled. After a single glance she had returned to her chair and was absorbed in her work again before the rattle of hoofs had died away.

No one gave a thought to the effect of the chilling reception on the young governor himself. As street after street was passed, his expression had changed from surprise to dawning comprehension and regret.

"Is it the good people's custom to

receive their governors this way?" he asked at last of the officer riding at his side.

The officer shrugged his shoulders.

"In my time they have shown him scant courtesy, monsieur. Perhaps if he were a native—but they are animals, these Sicilians."

"After they learn to know me?" d'Armagnac suggested thoughtfully.

The lieutenant made a gesture of denial.

"Deceive not yourself, monsieur.

The late governor tried for three years and could not even teach them to fear him. That is why so many soldiers are kept here, the very children scowl at us while they run into the houses."

"But why should they run?" inquired d'Armagnac with a puzzled frown.

"Because they are not fools, monsieur," said the other drily.

The governor glanced at him and rode on in silence. He did not speak again until they reached the massive stone building known as the palace, and which bore in reality more resemblance to a fort.

"This is the autumn of 1280," he said lightly. "By the autumn of 1281 I will not find the streets deserted when I ride through the city. That is if it please heaven and the king to leave me here so long."

The lieutenant smiled pityingly.

"The Sicilians are animals," he observed.

But Raoul d'Armagnac com-

menced his campaign next day when he put the soldiers under the same laws as the citizens. For the first time in years Esterlinga passed an undisturbed night.

The Sicilians looked at each other and waited. Next, he considered one by one, the numberless petty rules and regulations that made it wrong to do almost everything anyone wanted to do, and abolished them.

"Wait," said Don Giovanni di Neocastro grimly.

At the end of the first month they were still waiting. During the second month the governor invaded the enemy's camp by calling on Don Giovanni one afternoon.

"I am lonely," he explained, after the old noble's stiff greeting. "Imagine my situation, signor conte, in that palace of empty rooms."

"The late governor found sufficient amusement among his friends," replied Don Giovanni.

"If you permit, I will do the same," d'Armagnac said quietly. "Come, signor, surely I am not to be condemned to perpetual solitude. I realize that I am an outsider; come to the palace and advise me how best to govern Esterlinga."

For once Don Giovanni was at loss for a reply.

"I cannot interfere with your duties," he began in displeasure.

"And we will play chess," said d'Armagnac with an engaging smile. "I have been told my game is not bad, signor."

"Ah, chess," murmured Don Giovanni, and fell.

After that the governor and the Conte di Neocastro played chess every morning and incidentally emptied a flask of *vino bianco*. Esterlinga gasped.

At the end of four months d'Armagnac could no longer complain of loneliness; at the end of six, he was the most popular man in the city.

Esterlinga forgot his nationality and adopted him for her own, every door was open to him. The ladies ventured on the streets again and gratefully saluted the man who had made this possible. Already an atmosphere of peace and cheerfulness distinguished the town.

But it was during the first hard month that the governor met Donna Renata di Neocastro. It was his custom to take long rides about the country, quite unaccompanied in spite of the lieutenant's gloomy predictions. He was not afraid and the palace bored him. It was while returning one evening at dusk from such an expedition, that he saw Donna Renata descending the steps of the church. She saw him, too, and drew back. Then realizing it was too late to retreat, she gathered the folds of lace across her face.

"He is going into the church," she whispered reassuringly to her maid as he dismounted.

But to her dismay he stopped before them and bared his fair head.

"I have the honor of addressing the Signorina di Neocastro?" he asked courteously.

The young girl met his gaze with grave dignity.

"Yes, signor," she answered, her sweet voice shaken a little.

"I recognized your attendant, whom I have seen in passing your father's house. Permit me to show you what I found outside the walls half an hour ago." He smiled into her wondering eyes, and throwing back his cloak disclosed a tiny child asleep on his shoulder.

The girl gave a low cry and started forward.

"It is Emilio! Rosa, it is little Emilio!" she exclaimed. "Oh, signor!"

"Emilio Giovanni di Neocastro, he told me," said the governor, the smile in his eyes deepening. "One

moment, signorina," as she held out her arms, "his curls——"

And in fact one brown lock had wound itself obstinately around a clasp of his dress.

"How can we thank you. He is my little nephew and a sad runaway," Donna Renata said, watching his efforts to untwist the soft strands. "Oh, you will tangle it more, signor!"

"I am awkward," he said, pausing in embarrassment.

"No, but you have only one hand," she leaned forward impulsively and then checked herself.

"If I might ask your aid?" he suggested.

"It will be best," she acquiesced, and commenced the task simply and naturally.

Raoul d'Armagnac thought he had never seen anything so lovely and highbred as she stood before him, her slender fingers unwinding the tangled curl.

"Now it is free, signor," she said, drawing back. "Will you give him to me, please. My father and brother will be better able to express the gratitude that they cannot feel more deeply than I."

"May I not carry him for you?" he asked. "Emilio is heavy."

Even in the dusk he could see her sudden color.

"I thank you, signor," she replied in gentle, but decided refusal. "I have carried him before, and Rosa will help me."

He bowed and laid the child in her arms; for the moment he had forgotten the stern line drawn between the Sicilians and their conquerors. Donna Renata felt, rather than saw, that she had hurt him and hesitated.

"Indeed I thank you, signor," she repeated gravely, looking at him across Emilio's little head as she prepared to descend the steps.

He smiled at her, his gray eyes brilliant with resolve.

"I am reaping now what my predecessor sowed, signorina, by and by my own seed will bear fruit."

He watched them go down the narrow street and then went slowly back to his house.

It is possible this incident influenced his call on Don Giovanni almost as much as that noble's position of authority with the people. Emilio's father came to the palace to acknowledge the governor's rescue of the last scion of the house of Neocastro. And so a friendly spirit unconsciously grew up in place of the old animosity.

The same change occurred all over Esterlinga, they called him Don Raoul and chose to ignore his French blood. His flawless Italian aided the illusion and he brought none of his fellow countrymen from the other cities to dispel it. More and more he became part of the city.

Only Don Giovanni quarrelled with him every morning over the *vino bianco*.

"Oh, you French!" he would cry. "You devour the earth. It is not enough to have Italy, not enough to be masters of Sicily and ride untouched the streets of Palermo and Messina, no, now your king is turning towards Greece. It is not to be borne; some day you shall see."

Then the governor would smile across the table at the angry old man and ask teasingly, "And what could Esterlinga have more, signor conte, if Sicily were free?"

"Liberty!" Don Giovanni thundered, striking the table violently. "Liberty, signor, so that our sons should not grow up slaves. I would have every rascally Frenchman thrust from the island. That is, of course, I speak not of you, Don Raoul. I fear I am becoming heated——"

Then he would wipe his brow while the governor laughingly set up the scattered chessmen.

Long before the autumn of 1281 d'Armagnac had accomplished the

city had been lessened and this lessened also the burden on the people. The little farms around flourished without fear of hunting parties trampling their fields or picketing



"THROWING BACK HIS CLOAK, HE DISCLOSED A TINY CHILD ASLEEP ON HIS SHOULDER"

prediction he made to his lieutenant. Only pleasant salutes and friendly glances met him when he rode through Esterlinga. At his own request the number of troops in the

horses in the new grain. When all Sicily was writhing under oppression and insult of every kind, Esterlinga lay smiling and peaceful in her obscure corner.

"*Il Buono*," the grateful people called Don Raoul; "*Il Biondo*," the ladies said, glancing at each other roguishly, for the governor was the only fair-haired man in the city.

After that first meeting on the church steps d'Armagnac seized every pretext to visit the house of the Conte di Neocastro, but he seldom saw Donna Renata. Even after he was a welcome guest in many homes, it continued so, and finally he realized that she avoided him intentionally.

He was neither hurt nor angry, but began the new problem with the same quiet persistence and tact that had characterized the winning of Esterlinga. Circumstances aided him; as prosperity returned to the city some of the old gaiety returned also, and at the little dances d'Armagnac found an opportunity to meet her where she could not escape. No gathering was considered a success at which the governor and Don Giovanni were not present, and of course Donna Renata accompanied her father.

D'Armagnac was not quite so self-possessed as usual the first night he asked her to dance with him and took in his the little fingers that had left their light touch on his heart. Donna Renata was delicately flushed and veiled her dark eyes behind their heavy fringe of lashes. Neither spoke much; he asked if Emilio had run away again and she answered with the sweet seriousness that so charmed him.

But after they met thus a few times they learned to know each other more and to feel less constraint together. The governor began to watch eagerly for announcements of the different entertainments. As they were not very frequent and etiquette allowed but one dance in an evening, his courtship was extremely difficult. Perhaps once or twice a month they exchanged a few sen-

tences, yet he fancied there was a subtle difference in her manner, a distinction between him and the young Sicilians around her.

The months crept slowly away until the governor had been nearly a year in Esterlinga and finally he lost patience and waited for her on the steps of the old church one evening in May.

"I have not Emilio with me this time," he said as she came out and paused at sight of him. "Will you let me speak to you, signorina, or must I go and bring him?"

"It is late, signor," she answered, unable to return his smile. Instinctively she felt the earnestness beneath his light words. After the dark church she was dazzled by this sunset glow of rose and gold into which she had stepped. She found herself curiously helpless before the governor's clear eyes.

"Your maid is with you," he said unmoved. "It is but one question I would ask, Donna Renata, yet I will not detain you here against your wish. If it is your pleasure, I will go in silence."

The challenge startled the color from her face and she stood quite still, her breath coming and going rapidly. He waited quietly a moment, then made a gesture to the street below.

"Down there it is already dark, while here the sun is shining on us. Which shall I carry in my heart, signorina, the sunlight or the shadow?"

"Is it for me to say?" she asked in a low voice.

"Yes," he answered.

She shook her head sadly.

"Not so, Don Raoul. The shadow lies between us, and although you have lifted the shadow from all Esterlinga, that one you cannot lift. You are French; I, Sicilian."

"And is that all?" he demanded eagerly, taking a step towards her.

"Is it only that you are afraid, dear love? If you care for me, as I love you with all my heart, the shadow may fall on us but never between. Dear, I ask you only that; if you care, I will find the way to you."

She let her hands fall at her side, her fragile loveliness almost heavenly in the quivering pink light left by the setting sun.

"I tried to guard you from it," she said passionately. "I tried to avoid you, to save you this. Oh, you have made me happy, Don Raoul, but you——" her voice broke and she turned to go.

"Renata!" he cried, springing after her.

She put out her hand imploring.

"Remember all Esterlinga can see us. Let me go, for if you bid me, I shall stay."

He stopped at once and stood motionless until she had disappeared, the last rays of light shining on his uncovered head and radiant face.

The next day the governor called on Don Giovanni and asked for his daughter's hand, quite as simply and naturally as he would have spoken to one of his own countrymen. It seemed to him that as he had done more for Esterlinga than any Sicilian, his nationality should not count against him. Donna Renata's forebodings affected him not at all, except with added reverence for her gentleness and timidity. He was quite unprepared for Don Giovanni's prompt and startled refusal.

"I am sorry to wound you, Don Raoul, but it is impossible," the old noble added seeing the effect of his words.

"May I ask why?" the governor said. "I am not wealthy, signor, but I have a sufficient fortune."

"If you were a Sicilian, nothing could give me more happiness; there is no one else to whom I would so gladly give Renata. As it is, it is impossible."

"I have done my utmost for your city," d'Armagnac said bitterly. "What could a Sicilian do more?"

"But in case of war you would fight for France," the other retorted.

And because it was true the governor was silent. As he rose to go Don Giovanni held out his hand.

"Do not let this break our friendship, Don Raoul," he said, almost wistfully, "and, do not leave Esterlinga."

Raoul d'Armagnac looked down at him, the northern blood that made him *il biondo* lending its steadiness of purpose to his gray eyes.

"As long as Renata is here, I shall stay," he answered.

And Don Giovanni was silent in his turn.

They picked up the accustomed threads again. Every morning there was the inevitable game of chess and Don Giovanni discussed the events of the day over the flask of *vino bianco*, only his arguments were a shade less violent. If the governor were graver than before, he was also more gentle. After all, people are selfish; no one had time to notice him, aside from his official position, except Donna Renata.

They met as usual at the different houses and walked together during the slow, stately dances. At the end he always kissed her hand and for a second they looked into each other's eyes. It was not much, but it was almost enough for Donna Renata. She pictured to herself the quiet years passing in his companionship. Raoul's hair might grow white, but he would never leave her, the caress of his glance and voice would never change, and she was content.

If d'Armagnac was less satisfied, he made no sign to her. It was not for either of them to sully their names by a disgraceful flight.

The months slipped away until

another spring was approaching, a year and half after the governor's arrival. In tranquil Esterlinga the cloud gathering over Sicily was hardly perceived. Once an Aragonese came secretly and tried to ferment discontent among the people, but he met with little success and the governor sent him a request to leave the city.

"Bene," said Don Giovanni across the chessboard, "I like not these Aragonese."

The governor smiled, he knew better the spirit in the rest of the island, but he had confidence in Esterlinga. During the last few weeks he had sent nearly all his soldiers to Palermo in response to an urgent request for aid. The people there were growing strangely sullen and the French feared a riot. D'Armagnac shrugged his shoulders and made no objection when all his troops were withdrawn, except a few left for effect, he needed no guard to ride through his city. With the rest went the lieutenant, he had found Esterlinga very dull for the last two years.

Still the warnings had been so slight that all were equally unprepared when one exquisite spring dawn a messenger galloped in and roused the city to hear the tale of the Sicilian Vespers. The night before the people had risen in Palermo and not one of French blood was left alive.

White and sick, d'Armagnac listened to the story, and almost equally pale and alarmed were the citizens who spread the news.

Esterlinga took it very quietly after the first hours and cheered the governor when he appeared on the streets. The dominant feeling was a passionate desire to preserve the serene and untroubled life of the past year and a half.

The city gates were closed at

d'Armagnac's orders and the little handful of soldiers was sent to guard them. It was impossible to do more.

The reports that came in during the next weeks, showed plainly enough that it was not a trivial riot in Palermo that was taking place, but a revolution that comprised the whole of Sicily. From Messina, Regio, etc., came the same story and soon the conviction was forced on Raoul d'Armagnac that he and his dozen men were the only French left in the island. Even women and children had fallen beneath the Sicilians' long-suppressed fury.

Still Esterlinga stood firm, aided by her isolated situation, and she was reported to King Charles as the only city that remained loyal through that terrible week. But slowly and certainly the restlessness increased, the love of liberty awoke among the people and the bolder spirits murmured against the banner fluttering over the palace. The governor went calmly about the city, silencing many by his simple presence, but beneath the surface the agitation steadily grew.

There were no more dances and he did not see Donna Renata, although she watched him pass the house with a great dread in her dark eyes.

One morning a deputation from Messina arrived at the gate of the city and insolently demanded admittance. The governor granted it reluctantly, foreseeing the result, yet realizing his inability to enforce a refusal. They went straight to the house of the Conte di Neocastro and remained closeted with him all the long sunny morning hours while the city waited whispering strange rumors.

At noon Don Giovanni sent for the governor. D'Armagnac obeyed the summons without question, arguing little good from the disregard shown for his dignity. But his desire to

keep Esterlinga for the king was far greater than his personal pride and he entered the room with no change from his usual demeanor.

As his tall figure appeared on the threshold Don Giovanni rose.

"Signor, you are welcome," he said gravely. "I beg you to believe that I have a serious reason for requesting you to meet us here instead of at the palace. Will you be seated?"

The governor bowed and accepted the offered chair. Before him was a long table around which were seated the leading men of the city and the three deputies from Messina. He read open hostility in the faces of the latter as they were presented to him.

"Signor," Don Giovanni said after a moment's silence, "you must anticipate what we have to tell. It is not pleasant nor easy for us to say to our friend, 'We must abandon you,' and yet it is so. The rest of Sicily already reproaches us with selfishness in leaving our countrymen to fight alone because we ourselves, are happy. Now they ask if we will carry indifference so far as to make Esterlinga the only spot in Sicily from which Charles can start to regain his power. Signor, can you blame us if we answer no?"

"For some of this I was prepared," the governor answered, "but pardon me, Don Giovanni, if I say not from you. Think, you have to face the combined forces of France and Italy, and the army already equipped for the invasion of Greece. Can there be even a chance of success? I do not say your cause is not just, but I say it is hopeless."

"It is a possibility of liberty of which we have no right to deprive our children," returned Don Giovanni calmly.

"Say rather, have you a right to

involve them in the king's vengeance."

The old noble shook his head.

"If Sicily falls, Esterlinga will fall with her. We are resolved."

The governor looked around the table, reading the same resolution in every face.

"It is useless to ask whether you owe no loyalty to the king under whom you have dwelt happily for the last two years," he said bitterly.

"Useless indeed, signor, since we owe that happiness, not to King Charles, but to you," Don Giovanni retorted.

A murmur of assent ran through the circle. D'Armagnac was silent.

"Acknowledging this debt to you," the other continued, "seeing in you one who has become our trusted friend and companion, we ask you to come still closer to us. Be our governor still, Don Raoul, but hold your authority from Sicily instead of France."

The governor flushed dark red.

"The answer you made me a moment ago I return to you now, signor conte," he said haughtily. "My men and I will fall with our countrymen. You will find us at the palace. With your permission, Signori——"

"Wait!" Don Giovanni exclaimed rising hastily.

D'Armagnac paused at the door and faced them, an expression new to them on his face.

"These gentlemen would have me make you that offer," the Sicilian said. "I had no hope you would accept, Don Raoul, and I apologize for my share in it."

The governor bowed coldly.

"To die at the foot of his flag is the first impulse of a brave man," Don Giovanni went on more slowly, "but you cannot think so lightly of us as to believe we could raise our hands against you, and you have loved Esterlinga too well to be the

first to bring bloodshed into her streets. A ship is waiting, let it convey you and your followers to Italy."

From the garden below floated a peal of Emilo's baby laughter. The shadow in the governor's eyes deepened still more.

"It shall be as you wish," he answered in a low voice and turned to go.

"Wait still a little," Don Giovanni said. "Don Raoul, you have served Esterlinga as no one else has ever done, as I fear it will be long ere she is served again, and yet you go from us in sorrow and anger. Our burden of gratitude is too great for us to bear, but words of thanks would seem a mockery to us both and

one does not speak of reward to such as you. Yet you shall not carry from our city a grief that we can cure. Signor, what Giovanni di Neocastro refused to Raoul d'Armagnac, Esterlinga offers to her beloved governor."

He crossed the room and drawing back a curtain revealed a slight girl on the threshold, her great dark eyes shining through the misty folds of her veil, her lips parted, a deep rose flushing her delicate face.

With a great cry the governor sprang forward.

"Renata," he cried, "Renata!"

Before them all she went to him.

"Whither thou goest—" she faltered, then hid her eyes on his breast.

SONG IN WINTER TIME

By CLINTON SCOLLARD

The hips of the haw are wizened,
Shriveled the willow wand;
The north wind, long imprisoned,
Has broken each gyve and bond.
The red rose garth is barren;
Fled is the golden-wing,
Till a hand like that of Aaron
Shall smite, and behold—the Spring!

Buoyed by a hope eternal,
As old as the Eden-birth,
I can wait till the rapture vernal
Shall quicken the sleeping earth;
For mayhap when the sod is shaken,
When tingles the tip of the fir,
Love, like the Spring, will waken
In the slumbering heart of her!

MR. MORGAN'S DIAMOND STUD

By J. W. KENNARD

MR. MORGAN was decidedly out of temper. His one and only diamond stud was missing. Not that he might not have had a dozen, a thousand diamond studs if he had wished; for in the unclassic phrase of the day, Mr. Morgan, head of the great firm of Brewer, Morgan, and Gray, was "well fixed." But he didn't want a dozen, or a thousand studs; he wanted just one, and this particular one—this one that his wife gave him years ago, the Christmas before she left him. In that fact was its value to him, and not in its intrinsic costliness. He seldom wore it—that was because he didn't like display; but he kept it always within sight of eye or reach of hand—that was because he had not forgotten.

And now it was gone. He distinctly recalled having taken it out of its case on the night of the Websters' dinner, thinking that he would wear it. Then he changed his mind and put it back. Eh? What's that? Sure he put it back? Why, of course. What sense would there have been in putting it anywhere else? Where else *could* he have put it? But it wasn't in its box now, that was certain.

"Did you ring, sir?" asked Mrs. Millett, the housekeeper.

"Yes, Mrs. Millett, I did ring. I rang to tell you that my diamond stud is missing. I left it right here on the bureau on Monday night; I'm sure of that; and I haven't touched it

since. What do you suppose can have become of it?"

"I don't know, sir, I'm sure. I haven't seen it. Perhaps it has been brushed off on the floor, and has got——"

"Yes, and perhaps it has gone up the chimney, or climbed a telegraph pole, or is hiding in the cellar in the coal. It's your business, Mrs. Millett, to see to it that things don't get brushed off on the floor and hidden under the furniture. Now I want you to get the housemaid in here, and make a thorough search of the room until you find the stone. By the way, I suppose that new maid is all right; honest, eh?"

"I don't know anything more about her than you do, sir," replied the housekeeper with a sniff. "You know it was your orders that she should be engaged; you said you liked her looks——"

"Yes, yes, I know," said Mr. Morgan, testily. "I admit that I was a little hasty; I ought to have left the matter to you, as I generally do. But she's all right, I have no doubt. Now just call her, and look for that stone until you find it. I shall expect to see it in its case when I come home to dinner."

And Mr. Morgan was off to his office.

Mrs. Millett made a face that was not very respectful, behind the back of her retreating employer. Then she rang for Mary, and the two women began their search. But all to no purpose. It is all very well to